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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 001001

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR GENERAL PETRAEUS' VISIT TO OMAN

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard J Schmierer, Ambassador, State, Exec; REASON:
1.4(B), (D)

11. (U) Embassy Muscat warmly welcomes you on your return to Oman.
Below is an update on events since your last visit.

12. (C) Base Access Agreement: The renewal negotiations, in scheduling stage during your last visit, are now set to begin in Muscat in mid-December 2009. We do not see significant issues arising, including reaching an agreement on the annual payment.

13. (C)WRM: RAFO tells us they are unhappy with Congress' denial of AFCENT's request for funding to create the needed infrastructure at al Musanah to move the War Reserve Materials from Seeb North, where we are scheduled to conclude operations in May 2010.

14. (C) F-16 Acquisition by the Royal Air Force of Oman: Available information suggests that Oman will soon affirm agreement to purchase 12 additional F-16s to replace their aging Jaguar fighters and compliment the 12 already-purchased F-16s. We are still awaiting a letter of request, however. The acquisition is likely to also include an undisclosed number of Typhoon fighters.

15. (S) Iran: The Sultan made his delayed visit to Tehran August 4-6 without extensive international or regional press coverage. Strategically, he wanted to encourage the Iranian leadership to accept U.S. overtures, while, at a practical level, he achieved his primary goal of securing Iranian cooperation on curbing cross-border crime and smuggling. Despite Iranian claims, it does not appear that Oman has finalized an agreement to help develop the Kish gas field. Although his visit coincided with Ahmadinejad's inauguration, the Sultan did not attend. The Sultan was seen off at the airport by a relatively junior staffer, a distinct violation of protocol in regional terms. The absence of a senior official was perhaps an Iranian comment on the Sultan's non-appearance at the inauguration.

16. (C) Piracy: The threat of piracy to Oman's plans for diversification of its economy into manufacturing and trade, as well as tourism, appears to have spurred the government and the private sector to devise a protocol to transport both lethal and non-lethal equipment for use by security teams under contract to merchant carriers. Currently one ship husbanding agency has a contract with the Royal Oman Police to move this equipment to and from Muscat International Airport and ships in the port of Salalah, still seen as the closest "safe" port entering and exiting the Gulf of Aden. In a similar move, arms already embarked on ships are allowed to remain on board, under police seal, while in port.

¶7. (C) Yemen: Oman remains concerned about the situation in Yemen. It has begun delivering 300 tons of relief supplies to the Sa'ada refugees, taken by Omani aircraft to Sanaa and then distributed under Omani control. Oman continues to see President Saleh as the only hope for Yemeni stability. Meanwhile, we have heard that Oman has quietly been fortifying its side of the border and moving strategic assets further inland. A recent consular visit to Salalah revealed that Oman is routinely permitting Yemenis to enter Oman for medical treatment. The Omanis tell us that all elements of assistance - political, economic, and humanitarian - are fully coordinated with the GoY.

¶8. (S) Middle East Peace Process: The Omani Foreign Minister, Yusuf bin Alawi (YbA), was harshly critical on November 2 about what he perceived as U.S. backsliding on the issue of cessation of Israeli settlements. The Omanis feel very strongly about the situation in Gaza and the West Bank. In earlier meetings YbA had said that the Arabs have given enough, and now it is Israel's turn to give.

¶9. (S) ELINT: On December 5, 2007, the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) requested replacement ELINT equipment for the aging systems that were provided under the 2000 CLUSTER SPECTRUM, ELINT sharing agreement. A previous U.S. attempt to fund the replacement

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equipment via 1206 funding was unsuccessful. RAFO recently declined a suggestion to request 1033 (counter narcotics) funding because the Royal Omani Police has the counter narcotics mission and RAFO maintains strict adherence to the delineation of missions. With current FY 10 FMF funding levels for Oman, FMF is an improbable funding source for the replacement equipment. RAFO has become frustrated with the funding delay and is beginning to look elsewhere for the replacement equipment. The Omanis view our relationship as a strategic partnership. Failure to replace these systems could result in a missed opportunity for an improved intelligence sharing partnership with Oman, although the degree to which the Omanis would share data from new U.S.-funded ELINT equipment is a question mark.

¶10. (S) Sultan's Special Force (SSF) Shoot House: The shoot house construction is critical to the rapidly-growing importance of SOCCENT's relationship with the SSF and the access it gives us to the principle action arm in Oman. Both Yemen and Iran are of vital interest to the Oman Royal Court, of which the SSF is a key part on security. This unit has reached out to SOCCENT in a significant way in the past year seeking to establish a bilateral relationship and making it known that they understand and share our interest in these two key countries. With the shoot house construction and continued JCET/Exercise engagement, CENTCOM accrues significant credit, which if handled correctly over the next couple of years, can translate into valuable access to the Omani Royal Court and its view/intel on the region. The initial meeting between Embassy representatives, SOCCENT engineers and SSF took place on October 10, 2009. Follow-on discussion will be held between Embassy representatives, SOCCENT engineers and SSF on November 8, 2009, with a possible site survey. The meeting will focus on design size, standards, and functionality.
Schmierer